

May 2009

BASIC READING SKILLS AND THE LITERACY OF AMERICA'S LEAST LITERATE ADULTS

National Center for Education Statistics, May 6, 2009

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009481.pdf>

The study shows the English literacy skills of the America's least literate adults.

CENSUS HISTORY: COUNTING EVERY PERSON ONCE, ONLY ONCE AND IN THE RIGHT PLACE

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, May 11, 2009

<http://republicans.oversight.house.gov/media/pdfs/20090511Censusreport.pdf>

The report examines the Constitutional foundation and history of the U.S. Census and concludes that while the latest attempt by the White House to politicize the Census, though not entirely unprecedented, is unlikely to succeed. "When it comes to the Census, history demonstrates that political gamesmanship has always been the losing proposition," the report concludes. "Dating from before the founding of the United States through the present, there have been Census debates over everything from Constitutional issues and types of 'estimation' to reapportionment. In each and every debate, however, the politics of interference in and manipulation of the Census lose out to independence."

CRIME, VIOLENCE, DISCIPLINE, AND SAFETY IN U.S. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

National Center for Education Statistics, May 5, 2009

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009326.pdf>

The report uses data from the 2007-08 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) to examine a range of issues dealing with school crime and safety, such as the frequency of school crime and violence, disciplinary actions, and school practices related to the prevention and reduction of crime.

DEATH ROW U.S.A WINTER 2009

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, May 8, 2009

http://www.naacpldf.org/content/pdf/pubs/drusa/DRUSA_Winter_2009.pdf

The total number of death row inmates decreased from 3,309 a year earlier to 3,297. The states with the largest number of death row inmates were California with 678, Florida with 402 and Texas with 358.

DISCONNECTED YOUTH: A LOOK AT 16- TO 25-YEAR OLDS WHO ARE NOT WORKING OR IN SCHOOL

Congressional Research Service, April 22, 2009

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40535.pdf>

Policymakers and youth advocates have begun to focus greater attention on young people who are not working or in school. Generally characterized as "disconnected," these youth may also lack strong social networks that provide assistance in the form of employment connections and other supports such as housing and financial assistance. Without attachment to work or school, disconnected youth may be vulnerable to experiencing negative outcomes as they transition to adulthood.

DISSECTING THE 2008 ELECTORATE: MOST DIVERSE IN U.S. HISTORY

Pew Research Center, April 30, 2009

<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1209/racial-ethnic-voters-presidential-election>

The electorate in last year's presidential election was the most racially and ethnically diverse in U.S. history, with nearly one-in-four votes cast by non-whites, according to an analysis of Census Bureau data by the Pew Research Center. The nation's three biggest minority groups, blacks, Hispanics and Asians, each accounted for unprecedented shares of the presidential vote in 2008. Overall, whites made up 76.3% of the record 131 million people who voted in November's presidential election, while blacks made up 12.1%, Hispanics 7.4% and Asians 2.5%.

GALLUP STUDENT POLL NATIONAL REPORT

Gallup & America's Promise Alliance, May 5, 2009

http://www.gallupstudentpoll.com/gtmp/object_utils.display_object?id=922358&dumy=0

A poll by Gallup and America's Promise Alliance shows that more than one-third of students surveyed in grades 5 – 12 are struggling or suffering, and half are not hopeful, as quantified by Gallup researchers. The Gallup Student Poll measures the hope, engagement and well-being of students in grades 5–12 through a survey administered anonymously in America's schools. The national results will be used by America's Promise Alliance, the American Association of School Administrators and others in designing appropriate responses that support youth.

GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION: TRENDS IN TRAINING AND STUDENT DEBT

U.S. Government Accountability Office, May 4, 2009

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09438r.pdf>

The federal government invests significantly in medical education through various programs to help ensure that the anticipated supply of new physicians meets the nation's health care needs.

HARD TIMES IN THE HEARTLAND

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, May 4, 2009

<http://healthreform.gov/reports/hardtimes/ruralreport.pdf>

The study outlines the health care challenges facing rural communities. The report was developed by HHS staff from across the department and comes on the same day Director of the White House Office of Health Reform Nancy-Ann DeParle, HRSA Administrator Mary Wakefield, and Representative Mike Ross will hold a meeting with Americans from rural communities as part of the ongoing series of White House Health Care Stakeholder Discussions.

HARNESSING THE ADVANTAGES OF IMMIGRATION FOR A 21ST-CENTURY ECONOMY

Migration Policy Institute, May 13, 2009

http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/StandingCommission_May09.pdf

The U.S. immigration system neither meets labor market needs efficiently nor minds the interests of US workers with particular success, and has yet to devise a way that uses immigration to promote US economic growth and competitiveness well. This paper proposes an institutional solution to address this systemic failure, creating a permanent and independent body, situated within the executive branch, that is charged with recommending adjustments to immigration laws to the president and Congress: the Standing Commission on Labor Markets, Economic Competitiveness, and Immigration. The bipartisan panel would provide timely, evidence-based, and impartial analysis and recommendations to the president and Congress regarding employment-based immigration.

HEALTH CARE REFORM: AN INTRODUCTION

Congressional Research Service, April 14, 2009

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/122947.pdf>

Health care reform has emerged as an issue in the 111th Congress, driven by growing concern about widely discussed problems. Three predominant concerns involve coverage, cost and spending, and quality.

Commonly cited figures indicate that more than 45 million people have no insurance, which can limit their access to care and their ability to pay for the care they receive. Costs are rising for nearly everyone, and the country now spends more than \$2.2 trillion, more than 16% of gross domestic product (GDP), on health care services and products, far more than other industrialized countries. For all this spending, the country scores but average or somewhat worse on many indicators of health care quality.

INDEPENDENTS TAKE CENTER STAGE IN THE OBAMA ERA

Pew Research Center, May 21, 2009

<http://people-press.org/report/?pageid=1516>

Centrism has emerged as a dominant factor in public opinion as the Obama era begins. The political values and core attitudes that the Pew Research Center has monitored since 1987 show little overall ideological movement. Republicans and Democrats are even more divided than in the past, while the growing political middle is steadfastly mixed in its beliefs about government, the free market and other values that underlie views on contemporary issues and policies. Nor are there indications of a continuation of the partisan realignment that began in the Bush years. Both political parties have lost adherents since the election and an increasing number of Americans identify as independents.

KEY FACTS ON CORPORATE FOUNDATIONS

Foundation Center, May 2009

http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/keyfacts_corp_2009.pdf

Charitable giving by the nation's nearly 2,500 corporate foundations remained virtually unchanged in 2008, according to the study. Giving totaled an estimated \$4.4 billion last year. Corporate foundation giving will most certainly decline in 2009, with the banking and finance industries accounting for about one-quarter of corporate foundation support in recent years and corporate earnings down across the board. Slightly more than half of corporate foundations responding to the Center's annual forecasting survey said they expect to reduce their giving this year.

A NEW GOAL FOR AMERICA'S HIGH SCHOOLS: COLLEGE PREPARATION FOR ALL

The Brookings Institution, May 2009

http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/spring_high_schools_haskins.aspx

Economic inequality has been on the rise in America for more than three decades. The nation's traditional engine for promoting equality and opportunity -- its public education system -- has been unable to halt that upward trend despite increased public spending at the preschool, K-12, and post-secondary levels.

Meanwhile, accumulating research evidence reveals that postsecondary education has, for the past few decades, proved an increasingly powerful tool in boosting the income and economic mobility of disadvantaged students

OLDER IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Migration Policy Institute, May 2009

<http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=727>

After declining steadily between 1960 and 1990, the number of older immigrants (those age 65 and over) in the United States nearly doubled between 1990 and 2007, from 2.7 million to 4.5 million. Immigrants now account for one of every nine older persons in the United States.

ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE UNITED STATES: TRENDS AND ISSUES FOR CONGRESS

Congressional Research Service, April 16, 2009

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/122948.pdf>

Organized crime threatens multiple facets of the United States, including the economy and national security. In fact, the Organized Crime Council was recently reconvened for the first time in 15 years to address this continued threat. Organized crime has taken on an increasingly transnational nature, and with more open borders and the expansion of the Internet, criminals endanger the United States not only from within the borders, but beyond.

PROMOTING ECONOMIC MOBILITY BY INCREASING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

The Brookings Institution, May 2009

http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/05_economic_mobility_haskins.aspx

This report highlights and identifies the factors that are essential to boosting college enrollment and graduation rates of low-income students and lays out a plan to help enhance economic mobility particularly for those students.

SHIFTING BOUNDARIES: THE ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE AND GOVERNMENT FUNDING OF RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS AND OTHER FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, May 2009

<http://pewforum.org/newassets/images/reports/funding/funding.pdf>

The debate over government funding of religious groups and institutions raises some of the thorniest issues in the ongoing discussion about the appropriate relationship between church and state. Most legal scholars agree that the Establishment Clause in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution limits at least some government funding of religion, but they disagree sharply on exactly what is permissible.

STIMULATING EXCELLENCE: UNLEASHING THE POWER OF INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

Center for American Progress, May 5, 2009

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/05/stimulating_excellence.html

Recently, a new generation of social entrepreneurs has begun to transform public education with innovative solutions that have extraordinary potential to serve American students more effectively and efficiently. Programs like Teach For America, College Summit, New Leaders for New Schools, the Knowledge is Power Program, among others, are part of a growing movement to use new methods to deliver a higher-quality education to every student -- particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

TRANSFORMING AMERICA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A FEDERAL POLICY PROPOSAL TO EXPAND OPPORTUNITY AND PROMOTE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

The Brookings Institution, May 2009

http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2009/~media/Files/rc/reports/2009/0507_community_college_goldrick_rab/0507_community_college_brief.pdf

To renew America's status as the world's leader in college attainment, the federal government needs to transform America's community colleges and equip them for the 21st century. This long-overdue investment should establish national goals and a related performance measurement system; provide resources to drive college performance toward those goals; stimulate greater innovation to enhance the quality of sub-baccalaureate education; and support data systems to track student and institutional progress and performance.

All previous web alerts can be found at:
<http://france.usembassy.gov/politics-alert.html>